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IN THE CLAIMS:

The text of all pending claims are set forth below. Cancelled and withdrawn claims are indicated with claim number and status only. The claims as listed below show added text with underlining and deleted text with ~~strikethrough~~. The status of each claim is indicated with one of (currently amended), (currently amended), (previously presented), (cancelled), (withdrawn), (new), (previously added), (reinstated - formerly claim #), (previously reinstated), (re-presented - formerly dependent claim #) or, (previously re-presented).

Please AMEND the claims in accordance with the following:

1. (currently amended) A communication-~~method means~~-notification method for use in a communications system selectively employing different application-layer communication means-methods, installed in user information terminals on a network, for users to communicate with one another above the network's transport layer at the network's application layer by the different methods, the method comprising:

(a) ~~user relationally for each user~~, storing in a table types of the application-layer communication means-methods operable by ~~in~~-users' information terminals;

(b) ~~receiving a destination-user designation from a source user requesting~~ communication;

(c) ~~based on the stored types of application-layer communication methods~~, information stored in (a), generating a list describing only application-layer communication means-methods that are each operable at both the destination user's information terminal and the source user's information terminal; and

(d) ~~reporting the list to the source user before communication begins and allowing the source user to choose from the list a type of application-layer communication method which is operable by both users.~~

2. (currently amended) A communication-~~method means~~-notification system for use in a communications system selectively employing different application-layer communication means-methods installed in user information terminals on a network for users to communicate with one another above the network's transport layer at the network's application layer by the

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different methods, the system comprising:

a first table ~~user relationally storing for each user types of the application-layer~~
communication ~~means methods~~ operable ~~in by~~ users' information terminals;

an administration ~~means for unit~~ receiving operable communication ~~means methods~~
settings from users and storing the settings in said first table;

a designation ~~means for unit~~ receiving destination-user designations from source users
requesting communication;

an acquisition ~~means for unit~~ acquiring from said first table communication ~~means types~~
of methods that are operable at both source users' information terminals and destination users'
information terminals;

a generation ~~means for unit~~ generating a list, based on ~~information acquired by said~~
~~acquisition means the acquired types of application-layer communication methods, the list~~
describing only application-layer communication ~~means methods that are each~~ actually usable
by both source users and destination users; and

a notification ~~means for unit~~ reporting the generated list to source users before
communication begins.

3. (currently amended) The communication ~~means method~~ notification system set
forth in claim 2, further comprising:

for each user, a second table for storing relationally to users and predetermined user
statuses of communication means methods actually usable ~~in by~~ the user statuses; and

a prioritizing ~~means for unit~~ receiving settings on the actually usable communication
~~means methods~~ in the predetermined user statuses and storing the settings in said second
table; wherein

said first table together stores user statuses in addition to communication
~~means methods~~, and

said administration means receives settings on new user status and writes actually
usable communication ~~means methods~~ in the new user status into said first table in accordance
with said second table settings.

4. (currently amended) The communication ~~means method~~ notification system set
forth in claim 2, further comprising:

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for each user, a second table ~~for storing relationally to users and user statuses of~~ communication ~~means~~ methods actually usable ~~in~~ by predetermined user statuses, and priority levels for the communication ~~means~~ methods; and

a prioritizing ~~means for unit~~ receiving settings on the actually usable communication ~~means~~ methods in the predetermined user statuses, and the priority level settings for the actually usable communication ~~means~~ methods, and storing the settings in said second table; wherein

said first table together stores communication ~~means~~ method priority level and user status in addition to communication means,

said administration means receives settings on new user status and writes actually usable communication ~~means~~ methods in the new user status, and communication ~~means~~ methods priority level, into said first table in accordance with said second table settings,

said acquisition ~~means~~ unit acquires from said first table communication ~~means~~ methods actually usable by both a source user's information terminal and a destination user's information terminal and the priority level of the actually usable communication ~~means~~ methods, and

said generation ~~means~~ unit generates said list based on the priority level of ~~the~~ a communication ~~means~~ method actually usable by both the source user and the destination user.

5. (currently amended) The communication ~~means~~ method notification system set forth in claim 4, wherein said generation ~~means~~ unit rearranges the communication ~~means~~ methods in accordance with source user priority level.

6. (currently amended) The communication ~~means~~ method notification system set forth in claim 4, wherein said generation ~~means~~ unit rearranges communication ~~means~~ methods in accordance with destination user priority level.

7. (currently amended) The communication ~~means~~ method notification system set forth in claim 2, wherein said designation ~~means~~ unit receives designations using identification information designating operable communication ~~means~~ methods at destination users' information terminals.

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8. (currently amended) The communication-~~means-method~~ notification system set forth in claim 2, wherein

said designation ~~means-unit~~ is enabled to receive a destination-user's designation according to identification information specifying operable communication ~~means-methods~~ at destination users' information terminals; and

if a communication ~~means-method~~ corresponding to the identification information is usable by both a destination user and a source user, said generation ~~means-unit~~ describes that communication ~~means-method~~ at the head of the list.

9. (currently amended) The communication-~~means-method~~ notification system set forth in claim 2, wherein said designation ~~means-unit~~ is enabled to receive a destination user's designation according to identification information specifying operable communication ~~means-methods~~ at destination users' information terminals, further comprising

a starting ~~means-for-unit~~ starting, if a communication ~~means-method~~ corresponding to the identification information is usable by both a destination user and a source user, communication according to that communication-~~means-method~~.

10. (currently amended) The communication-~~means-method~~ notification system set forth in claim 2, wherein said communication ~~means-method~~ is a game application wherein a plurality of users can participate on a network.

11. (currently amended) A computer-readable recording medium whereon is recorded a communication-~~means-method~~ notification program for use in information terminals wherein are installed communication ~~means-methods~~ selectively employed by users for communicating with one another above the network's transport layer at the network's application layer by the different methods is installed, and for use in information terminals able to communicate with said information terminals; said communication ~~means-method~~ notification program recorded on the computer-readable recording medium for executing the following steps a process, the process comprising:

A. ~~preparing a first table user relationally storing for each user types of the application-layer~~ communication ~~means-methods~~ operable ~~in~~ by users' information terminals;

B. ~~receiving operable communication means-methods settings from users and~~

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storing the settings in said first table;

C. ~~receiving destination-user designations from source users requesting communication;~~

D. ~~acquiring from said first table types of communication means-methods operable at both source users' information terminals and destination users' information terminals;~~

E. ~~generating a list, based on the acquired types of application-layer communication methods, information acquired by said acquisition means, describing only application-layer communication means-methods that are each actually usable by both source users and destination users; and~~

F. ~~reporting the generated list to source users before communication begins.~~

12. (currently amended) A ~~communication-means-method~~ notification method for use in a communications system selectively employing different application-layer communication means-method installed in user information terminals on a network for users to communicate with one another above the network's transport layer at the network's application layer by the different methods, the method comprising:

user relationally for each user, storing types of the application-layer communication means-methods operable in by users' information terminals;

(a) ~~receiving a destination-user designation from a source user requesting communication;~~

(b) ~~based on the stored types of application-layer communication methods, information stored in (a), generating a first list describing only application-layer communication means-methods that are each operable at in both the destination user's information terminal and the source user's information terminal;~~

(c) ~~generating a second list describing one or more application-layer communication means-method present at either the destination or source user's information terminal and not at the other, and downloadable to the terminal not having the communication means-method present and executable on said terminal; and~~

(d) ~~reporting a third list composite of the first list and the second list to the source user before communication begins.~~

13. (currently amended) The ~~communication-means-method~~ notification method set

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forth in claim 12, wherein said second list ~~includes~~ comprises a description of a communication means-method not present on either the destination nor the source user's information terminal, and downloadable to both terminals and executable on both terminals.

14. (currently amended) The communication ~~means-method~~ notification method set forth in claim 12, wherein:

download conditions for downloading communication ~~means-methods~~ means-methods to users' information terminals and execution conditions for executing communication ~~means-methods~~ means-methods on users' information terminals are stored in advance for each downloadable communication ~~means-method~~ means-method; and

the second list is generated based on terminal information and download conditions and execution conditions for users' information terminals.

15. (currently amended) The communication ~~means-method~~ notification method set forth in claim 12, wherein:

selection of any of the communication ~~means-methods~~ means-methods on the third list is received from the source user and the selected communication ~~means-method~~ means-method is reported to the destination user's information terminal; and

if the destination user's information terminal does not have the selected communication ~~means-method~~ means-method, the destination user's information terminal acquires the selected communication ~~means-method~~ means-method by downloading.

16. (currently amended) A computer-readable recording medium whereon is recorded a program for executing the communication ~~means-method~~ notification method set forth in the foregoing claim 12.

17. (currently amended) A communication ~~means-method~~ notification system for use in a communications system selectively employing different application-layer communication ~~means-methods~~ means-methods installed in user information terminals on a network for users to communicate with one another above the network's transport layer at the network's application layer by the different methods, the system comprising:

a first table for each user ~~user relationally~~ storing types of the application-layer

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communication ~~means methods~~ operable ~~in~~ by users' information terminals;

a designation ~~means for unit~~ receiving destination-user designations from source users requesting communication;

a first generating ~~means for unit~~ generating a list, based on the types of application-layer communication methods information stored in said first table, describing only application-layer communication means methods that are each operable on both destination users' information terminals and source users' information terminals;

a second generating ~~means for unit~~ generating a second list describing one or more application-layer communication means-method present at either a destination or a source user's information terminal and not at the other, and downloadable to the terminal not having the communication ~~means-method~~ present and executable on said terminal; and

a notification ~~means for unit~~ reporting a third list composite of the first list and the second list to the source user before communication begins.

18. (currently amended) A communication ~~means-method~~ supply device for use in the communication-~~means-method~~ notification system set forth in claim 17, including:

a creation ~~means for unit~~ creating a downloadable-executable list of communication ~~means-methods~~ downloadable to information terminals and executable on the information terminals for destination users and source users respectively; and

a supply ~~means for unit~~ supplying communication ~~means-methods~~ included in the downloadable-executable list to user information terminals.

19. (currently amended) A communication-~~means-method~~ notification method for use in a communications system selectively employing different application-layer communication means-methods installed in user information terminals on a network for users to communicate with one another above the network's transport layer at the network's application layer by the different methods, the method comprising:

(a) ~~user relationally for each user~~ storing types of the application-layer communication means-methods operable on users' single or plural information terminals and terminal identification information for identifying users' information terminals;

(b) ~~receiving~~ a destination-user designation from a source user requesting communication;

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(c) — based on the stored types of application-layer communication methods, ~~information stored in (a)~~, generating a list describing only application-layer communication means-methods that are each operable at by both the destination user's information terminal and the source user's information terminal; and

(d) — ~~wherein when~~ a plurality of the same communication ~~means-method~~ is included in said list, adding to said list further information for distinguishing the information terminals, and reporting said list to the source user before communication begins.

20. (currently amended) The communication-~~means-method~~ notification method set forth in claim 19, wherein:

a user-set messages with respect to communication ~~means-method~~ on information terminals are stored together with the communication ~~means-method~~ and information terminals; and

a destination-user-set message is further included in the list reported to the source user.

21. (currently amended) The communication-~~means-method~~ notification method set forth in claim 19, wherein:

the communication ~~means-method~~ operable at the same user's single information terminal or plurality of information terminals are grouped by predetermined criteria;

said list is generated based on the grouped communication-~~means~~ methods; and

the communication ~~means-methods~~ described in said list are grouped by the predetermined criteria, and reported to the source user before communication begins.

22. (currently amended) The communication-~~means-method~~ notification method set forth in claim 21, wherein by-group priority rankings are established for the communication ~~means~~ methods, and said list is created based on the priority rankings.

23. (currently amended) The communication-~~means-method~~ notification method set forth in claim 22, wherein said priority rankings are established based on sequence made by usability within the groups.

24. (currently amended) The communication-~~means-method~~ notification method set

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forth in claim 22, wherein:

a recommended communication ~~means-method~~ is established for each source user in each communication ~~means-method~~ group; and

said list is generated by modifying the communication ~~means-method~~ priority rankings for each source.

25. (currently amended) The communication ~~means-method~~ notification method set forth in claim 21, wherein selection of any group based on said list is received from the source user, and an attempt is made to communicate with the destination user's communication ~~means-method~~ included in the selected group.

26. (currently amended) The communication ~~means-method~~ notification method set forth in claim 21, wherein:

selection of any group based on said list is received from the source user;

inquiry is made to the destination user's communication ~~means-method~~ included in the selected group as to whether it is receiving or not; and

communication begins with the communication ~~means-method~~ first to respond in the destination user's information terminal.

27. (currently amended) A computer-readable recording medium whereon is recorded a program for executing the communication ~~means-method~~ notification methods set forth in any of the foregoing claim 19.

28. (currently amended) A communication ~~means-method~~ notification system for use in a communications system selectively employing different application-layer communication means-methods installed in user information terminals on a network for users to communicate with one another above the network's transport layer at the network's application layer by the different methods, the system comprising:

for each user, a first table for user relationally storing types of the application-layer communication means-methods operable on users' single or plural information terminals and terminal identification information for identifying users' information terminals;

designation ~~means-for-unit~~ receiving a destination-user designation from a source user

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requesting communication;

generating ~~means for unit~~ generating a list based on ~~information the types of application-layer communication methods~~ stored in said first table, describing only application-layer communication means methods that are each operable at by both the destination user's information terminal and the source user's information terminal; and

notification ~~means for unit~~ adding to said list, wherein a plurality of the same communication ~~means method~~ is included in said list, further information for distinguishing the information terminals, and for reporting said list to the source user before communication begins.

29. (new) A method according to claim 1, wherein the application-layer communication methods comprise at least two or more of the group comprising email, chat, and instant messaging.

30. (new) A method of allowing a user to choose an application-layer communication method for use in a communications system selectively employing different application-layer communication methods installed in user information terminals on a network for users to communicate with one another, the method comprising:

automatically determining a set of available application-layer communication methods comprising application-layer communication methods; and

when the first user uses their terminal to initiate communication with the second user, displaying on the first user's terminal a list of indicia of the available application-layer communication methods, and allowing the first user to select only a displayed application-layer communication method that is available at the first user's terminal and that is available at the second user's terminal.